



*Do you believe in the power of prayer?*



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Dearest family & friends...

*Marge & Shirley*  
*Happy St. Valentine's Day*  
Thank you for calling and writing. It means a lot for me to hear from you. *Thank you for the Covenant Times.*

I believe your prayers matter, that they in fact are being answered. In my Jan. lab work, my T-4 cells (those the immune system produces to fight infection) have gone up for the first time since 1990, and are now at my 1994 level. Keep in mind as Spring is unfolding: most miracles come about in slow motions. May your prayers also come true. May God bless.



*Love to*  
*you two,*  
*Michael*  
*Dwyer*



© 1996, Michael Dupree, *Do you believe in the power of prayer?*



fellowship of the Church, but  
I still have some things, personal  
things, to resolve.

I Love you all and keep  
you in my prayers. Thank  
you so much for letting me  
tell you these things. I really  
have kept my thoughts inside,  
for that is my nature, but I know  
the Lord is working on me.

Yours always in  
Christian love—

Casey

POPPIES

Kitagawa Sōsetsu, Japanese, mid-17th century, Edo period

Detail from a hanging scroll in colors on gold paper

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

H. O. Havemeyer Collection

Bequest of Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer, 1929 29.100.524

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11-09039-6

Printed in the U.S.A.



Rev. Marge.

Thank you so much for your note of concern and all of your prayers and friendship. I am keeping up with the church through various people and my newsletter. I am so very happy that the building is now a "home".

I have been struggling within myself as how my life is turning since Rob has left my life. I loved him so very much. The real conflict has been my idea that if he had only given me more time, I would have "come-around" and decided that I could trust

him, and we could have had a great life together. All the literature I read and people I talked to said "don't go backwards". If someone has left you, then it is "un-wise" to try and reconcile. That ~~is~~ why I had told him I wouldn't get back together --- but inside, I knew it would have been right for my true feelings. I'm still so very sad that he left this world in my arms, with no chance for me to change my mind. I know he went to be with the Lord and I accepted it, but still it is hard. Please bear with me, I want to come back into the fold of



ADDED  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
at Birmingham Alabama  
Warren & Knight B. Associated  
Miller & Martin Architects







22 February

Dear Marge,

Thanks for sending me the  
booklet, "The Bible and Homosexuality."  
God bless you in your ministry.

Sincerely,  
Morgan Roberts

Independent Presbyterian Church  
Birmingham, Alabama







To: Pastor and Staff of Covenant MCC.

Thank you for keeping me on your mailing list. Although I have attended only one service, and that one at your previous location, I still remember the love radiated by those in attendance and those who led the services. Thank you and I look forward to attending at your new location.

Love in Christ,  
Mark S. Witte  
September 29, 1994 AD



October 12, 1994

Mr. Mark Witte  
1149 Linwood Street  
Birmingham, AL 35215

Dear Mark:

Thank you so much for your note and your check.

I'm very grateful that you were aware of a sense of love and community at Covenant and hope you'll come back and experience that in person again. MCC's all over the world try to convey to people the idea that everyone is accepted right where they are -- they may grow and change for the better after experiencing a positive relationship with a loving God; we usually do -- but they are okay, welcome, and loved as they are and for whom they are. It's always rewarding when visitors tell us that they felt that love and caring when they attended our church. We mean it!

Thanks for showing your love, care and concern in a tangible way. We have put your contribution in the account that funds the newsletter, feeling that's one way we can stay in touch with you, even when you are not present with us.

I hope you'll come visit with us again soon.

In Christ's love,

Rev. Marge Ragona  
Pastor





MARK S. WETTE  
1149 LINWOOD ST.  
BIRMINGHAM AL 35215



COVENANT METROPOLITAN  
COMMUNITY CHURCH  
P.O. BOX 101473  
BIRMINGHAM AL 35210









You have become  
such a part of my  
life and I am so  
glad to have you  
in it.

I appreciate all  
your comforting words,  
kindness and caring  
during Mother's  
illness and after  
her death. It was  
so wonderful of  
you and Shirley to  
come to the funeral  
home and visit, and  
the plant was  
beautiful.

The two of you  
are so important to  
me and such a  
blessing. I treasure  
you both.

Love,  
Dorothy

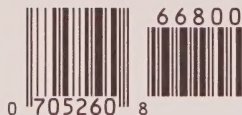


Thank you  
for being there to listen.  
Thank you  
for being my friend.

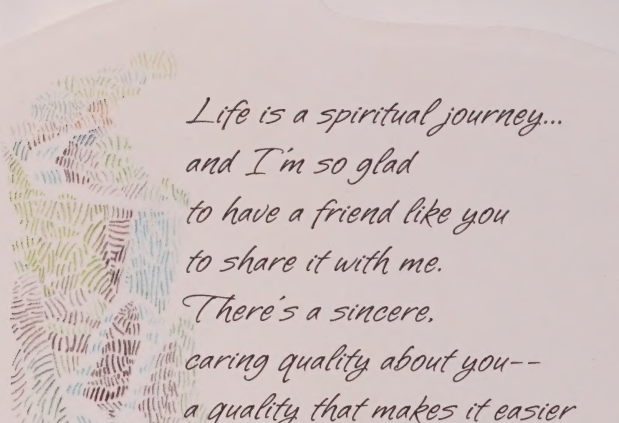
Barbara Loots

Love,  
A. Lannon

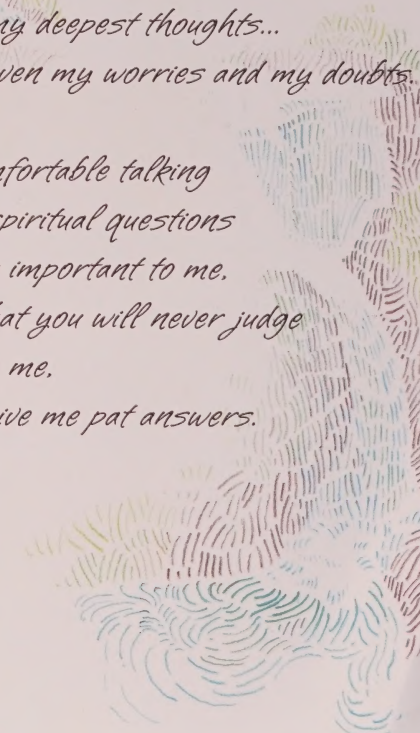
Between  
You and Me



175NPT 680-0  
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Life is a spiritual journey...  
and I'm so glad  
to have a friend like you  
to share it with me.  
There's a sincere,  
caring quality about you--  
a quality that makes it easier  
for me to share  
my deepest thoughts...  
even my worries and my doubts.  
With you,  
I feel comfortable talking  
about the spiritual questions  
that are so important to me,  
knowing that you will never judge  
or criticize me,  
or try to give me pat answers.



Marge



  
Hollman & Co.







Why should the following NOT be dropped?

- Carlos Brown (over 6 months since attended anything)
- Kathleen Gulus (over 6 months since attended anything)
- Sharon Black (over 6 months since attended anything)
- Jeff Wood (moved) - *send to Randall's file*
- Brian Smith (moved)
- Lisa Rhodes (over 6 months since at a regular service)
- Kim Harville (over 6 months since at a regular service)
- Tim Miller (moved) *Give to Shirley*
- Danny Gallups (over 6 months since at a regular aervice)
- John Frye (over 6 months since at a regular service)
- Donna Blethen (over 6 months since at a regular aervice)
- Rita Mickle (over 6 months since at a regular aervice)
- Troy Jacobs (over 6 months since at a regular aervice)
- Cindy Moutrey (two regular services in 12 months)
- Carla Pomeroy (two regular services in 12 months)
- Larry Guy (moved)
- W.M. Bracey (moved)

*Letters sent  
10-4-94*





Sept 21, 1994

Rev Marge Ragona,

Would you please put  
me on your mailing list. I  
haven't been to the M.C.C.  
Church in Birmingham.  
I have attended the M.C.C.  
Church in San Jose & Chicago  
when I lived there.

I have several friends  
who attend Church in 'B'ham  
and I am very interested in  
attending also.

Thank you,

Jimmie Lynn Taylor

C-5 Wood Arm Apts  
Childersburg AL 35044

added to list  
and  
letter sent  
9/28/94







Allen:

Use this where  
you think Cliff would  
have wanted it used,  
please.

Thank you so much  
and God bless you  
all.

Mrs. Morrison

letter  
mailed  
9-28-94





Alma

Dear Alma

I am thinking of you  
and how much I love you

Always

With love  
and for Alma

Alma

My Mother

4/25/24  
4/25/24  
4/25/24

Mrs. C. D. Morrison

2420 Ashland Dr.,

Birmingham, Alabama 35228



Covenant Metropolitan Community Church  
P.O. Box 101473  
Birmingham, Alabama 35210

Attention. Mr. Alex Francis ✓ got check



September 28, 1994

Mrs. Clifford P. Morrison  
2420 Ashland Drive  
Birmingham, AL 35226

Dear Mrs. Morrison:

Our church treasurer passed along to me a note that you had sent with your check for one thousand dollars.

First, I want to thank you for being so generous in supporting our (and Cliff's) church. We appreciate your gift to us. I hope you didn't feel you had to contribute to repay us for caring for Cliff -- that was done out of love for him, as you must know. So many people in the church continue to express how much they miss him, and I'm sure you do, too.

We have placed your gift in the building fund, with the hope that one day we will have our own building. This was a dream of Cliff's and we felt this was the best place to put that money to work.

Last Sunday, I was installed as pastor, and I hope if I can ever be of service to you, you will allow me to do whatever I can do. You and your family touched all of our hearts the day of Cliff's funeral, and we would just like to remind you that we are here for you, as we were here for him.

Again, please accept our gratitude for your memorial to Cliff and our love for you goes out in many ways.

In Christ's love,

Rev. Marge Ragona











## Covenant Metropolitan Community Church

(205)599-3363 5117 First Avenue, North P.O. Box 101473 Birmingham, Alabama 35210

Rev. Marge Ragona  
Pastor

September 19, 1994

Mr. Stanton H. Lee, Jr.  
6631 2nd Ave. S.  
Birmingham, AL 35212

Dear Stan,

The family at Covenant Metropolitan Community Church embraced Scott Beach with love. They celebrated with you his walk home to be with our Creator. The memorial service was very moving. They now comfort you during your time of bereavement.

Thank you so much for your special contribution in his memory. The memorial was placed in the Building Fund of the Church. CMCC started that fund, looking forward to our own building someday.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Allan".

ALLAN FRANCIS  
Treasurer

A handwritten word "Copy" followed by a long, sweeping horizontal line that extends across the page.









Sunday Nite  
Oct 9, 1994

Dear Rev. Marge Rogers

I am very sorry I have  
not been back in Church  
But I have lost my Home  
in Gardendale, and have  
been living here and there  
for a while. I have this P.O. Box  
P.O. Box 815 <sup>for mailing</sup>  
~~for money~~  
Dolet, Ala. 35061-0815

I am now with Two Girls  
at Clay, Ala. for now, I am  
not over my Breakdown  
and losing everything I owned  
I have no money at this  
time to give back to the  
Church, like I want to do.

P.S. I miss all of you but can not take a large  
crowd of people now. I don't want to be bothered by  
feet again soon. I don't have much paper - please excuse this

But I don't want to  
loose my membership in  
the church - my heart &  
soul are there if not body  
for now I am under the care  
for my mental & nerve troubles  
need all pray for me and I can get  
my being able to get my  
disability started it is not  
here yet. But I am still  
trying with doctors & attorney  
for it - it is bad - but I  
lost everything - I need  
the love & pray & script  
from my church I love all  
of you - you all have been  
with me many times Love  
Troy - Give my love & pray to everyone

Mr. Troy Jacobs  
P.O. Box 815  
Dolomite, Ala 35061-0815

Dear Troy:

I am sorry to hear that things are still not going well for you. We miss you.

I received your letter and am very glad to have an address to we can keep in touch with you. I realize how hard it is to start over, especially when you are still not well. I'm glad you have friends you can stay with, both for a place to live and for emotional support. As far as paying the church back, for the time being let it ride. You will repay us when you get back on your feet, we know that, and right now you need to see about taking care of yourself. We are in a pretty good place, all things considered, and you still need help.

Don't worry about losing your membership. We usually take people off the list if we have not seen or heard from them in six months, but since you have written us asking to be kept on the church rolls, we will not remove you. I hope soon you will have your Disability and can then begin to care for yourself and make some headway. We will be praying for you and for your physical health, mental health, and financial condition. You always know you have our love and support, and we will do all we can to help you in any way. I pray for you daily -- you are always on my mind, and especially each Sunday as we pray for the members of the congregation in need, your name comes to my mind immediately. I care for you a great deal and pray for you constantly.

Stay in touch with us as you can. Our love is with you.

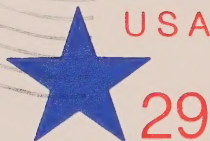
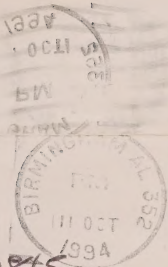
In Christ,

Rev. Marge Ragona





Jacob  
P.O. Box 815  
Doletville Ala  
35061-0815



Covenant metropolitan Community Church  
att. Rev. Marge Ragona  
P.O. Box 101473  
BHam. ala. 35210

© USPS 10

♻️ RECYCLED

W2







Dear Marge

*It's easy to say  
thank you--*

*What's difficult to do  
Is express the many  
special thoughts  
Behind these thanks  
to you!*

Thank you for the  
bud vase, your visit  
And most of all  
for your prayers.  
Dorothy Swens

Ambassador



10% post-consumer and  
40% pre-consumer fiber

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175T 14 J





Marge Ragona, Covenant MCC  
911-G Valley Ave  
Birmingham, AL 35209  
(205) 599-3363 (office)  
(205) 802-7714 (home)

Patrick T. Donahue  
4607 Old Railroad Bed Road  
Harvest, AL 35749  
(205) 721-0726 (home)  
(205) 961-1154 (office)

Dear Ms. Ragona,

August 29, 1994

I appreciated getting to talk to you on the phone today. You were very nice to me. This was important to me, because I want things to remain this way before, and even after our Bible debate. I believe that we can debate issues that divide us and remain friends at the same time. This letter is to propose the details of the possible debate that we discussed on the phone.

I am proposing a Bible discussion for sometime this Fall (1994) in the Birmingham, AL area. There would be two sessions of two hours length each, held on Monday and Tuesday night at 7:00 p.m. at the Birmingham Wedding Chapel. Based upon your recommendation, I suggest that a session include two 20-minute speeches by each speaker, followed by one 10-minute speech by each speaker, concluding with a 20-minute question and answer session (written questions from the audience), for a total of two hours.

Let me assure you that I would widely advertise the discussion among the many churches of Christ in the Birmingham area. I would expect you to encourage the members of the MCC church there (other places would be a plus) to attend. We both would also want to advertise the debate to the general public in the Birmingham area.

On Monday night I would affirm the following proposition (you and/or Greg Bullard would deny):

The Bible teaches that sexual intercourse between human beings of the same sex is always sinful.

On Tuesday night you and/or Greg Bullard would affirm the following proposition (I would deny):

The Bible teaches that sexual intercourse between human beings of the same sex is not always sinful.

Separate and apart from the questions generated by the audience, each speaker may ask the opposing speaker up to 5 written questions per session. These questions are to be submitted to the opposing speaker approximately 20 minutes before the session is to start. Written answers will be returned approximately 10 minutes before the session starts.

Waiting to hear from you soon,

*Patrick T. Donahue*









*A Gift For  
You*



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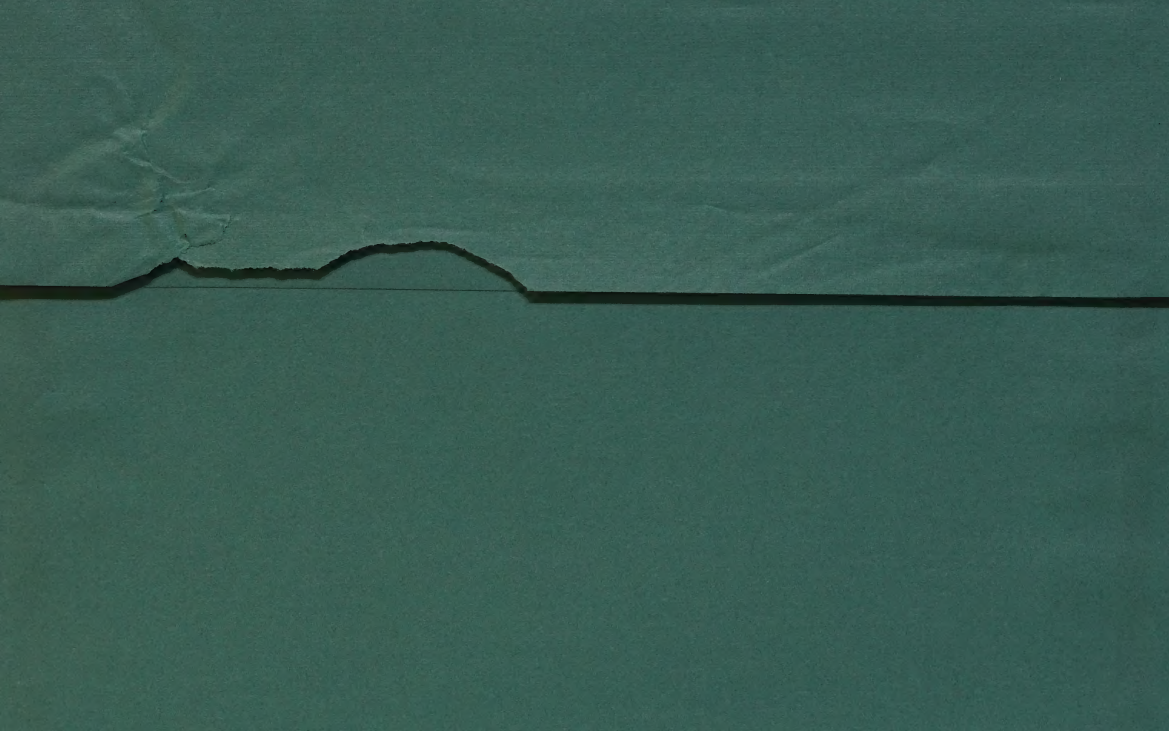














October 27, 1994

Dear Clergy:

November is National Alzheimer's Awareness Month. **Sunday, November 13, is the National Day of Prayer for the four million Americans with Alzheimer's disease and their families.**

Alzheimer's disease (AD) has been called a "silent epidemic," claiming over 52,000 in Alabama, more than 9,000 in Jefferson County alone. Approximately 10% of the population over age 65 are affected. **Do you know how many that would be in your congregation?**

The disease is progressive, degenerative, and ultimately fatal, destroying crucial parts of the brain over a period of 5 to 20 years. Memory and intellectual abilities gradually erode, leaving the patient totally dependent.

**Will you lead your congregation in prayer for those suffering from Alzheimer's disease and for their caregivers on Sunday, November 13.** Enclosed is a prayer provided by the National Alzheimer Association that may be printed in your bulletin on November 13. There are members of your congregation dealing with this illness who need to know they are not alone.

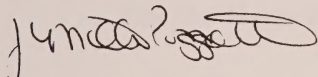
■ **Local Sources for Support** ■

The **UAB Alzheimer Family Program** offers education and counseling to caregivers through support groups, monthly newsletters, and telephone counseling. The telephone number is 934-2178.

**Alzheimer's/Central Alabama** is a volunteer caregiver organization offering peer support, a lending library, workshops, and opportunities for advocacy. The telephone number is 836-2775.

Thank you for making this information available to your members.

Sincerely,



J. Miller Piggott, MSW  
Coordinator  
Alzheimer Family Program

/fmt

Enclosure





# *Prayer for Patients*

November is National Alzheimer's Awareness Month. Sunday, November 13, is the Day of Prayer for our patients, caregivers, and service providers. Please share this prayer with your church or synagogue and ask that it be printed in their bulletin.

---

## *Alzheimer's Disease Month Prayer*

by Al Garfield

Dear Lord, we pray:

- For those who have died of Alzheimer's Disease...Peace
- For those who are now victims of Alzheimer's Disease...Dignity and Comfort
- For the Alzheimer's Disease caregivers...Compassion and Patience
- For Alzheimer's families...Strength and Courage
- For those who seek the cause, cure, prevention, and treatment of Alzheimer's Disease...Your Guidance and Direction, and
- For the Hope You have given us...Our Thanks

Amen



Lee White  
5203 6th Ave. South  
Birmingham, AL 35212

January 4, 1995

Reverend Marge Ragone  
Covenant Metropolitan Community Church  
5117 1st Avenue North  
Birmingham, AL 35212

Dear Marge —

I want to take a moment to let you know that I appreciate the work and love you give to our church and community. This last year was difficult for me. Your sermons encourage me and offer strength. It's obvious to me you put lots of research and thought and prayer in your sermons.

I also appreciate your workshops. I've been able to attend a few and have found them strengthening and insightful.

The counseling session we had was helpful. I often wish I knew the answers and reasons for things — relationship endings, beginnings, certain circumstances. It's been humbling to me to further realize my limitations. But, to have someone listen is very healing.

I pray for blessings for you and Shirley.  
Best wishes in the New Year. Thank you again.

Sincerely,

Lee





MARGE,

I WOULD LIKE TO EXPRESS MY SINCEREST THANKS TO YOU, KAY, SHIRLEY, CAL, CLIFF AND JOHN FOR THE BEAUTIFUL CARD.

TO SAY I WAS "SHOCKED" IS AN UNDERSTATEMENT, I HAVE NEVER HAD ANYONE REMEMBER <sup>ME</sup> IN THEIR PRAYERS OR THOUGHTS BEFORE.

THE CARD BROUGHT TEARS OF JOY FOR ME IN A TIME WHEN I FELT TOTALLY ALONE. MIKE, MY HUSBAND HAS RELOCATED TO TAMPA AND THIS PAST YEAR WE'VE BEEN TOGETHER EVERY OPPORTUNITY THAT PRESENTED ITSELF. YET, I STILL GET LONELY AND EMPTY INSIDE.

EVERY SUNDAY THAT I ATTEND, MORE ISSUES COME TO LIGHT THAT I CAN RELATE TO FROM YOUR SERMONS. (IN FACT ALL THE SERMONS).

I FEEL THAT I'M NO LONGER UNDOING GOD'S WORK BY HAVING MY REASSIGNMENT SURGERY AND I TRULY KNOW THE LORD WILL BE WITH ME.

TO ALL OF YOU, I THANK YOU

REMEMBER ME,

LOVE

Joan Alexandria Cunningham

JOAN ALEXANDRIA CUNNINGHAM









11:41 pm 06/17/1995

Page 1

Covenant Metropolitan Community Church  
5117 First Ave. N.  
P.O. Box 101473  
Birmingham, AL 35210  
3 Up Mailing Labels

Agape House Fund Contributions

Timothy T. Burkett  
505 Antwerp Ave. S.  
Birmingham AL 35212

Sandy Capps  
603 Broadway  
Birmingham AL 35209

Wes Fortner  
P.O. Box 55014  
Birmingham AL 35255

Gary Gill  
3428 Altamont Rd.  
Birmingham AL 35205

Robert Hill  
P.O. Box 530785  
Birmingham AL 35253

\* \* \* END OF REPORT \* \* \*

*Thank you letters sent  
6/20/95  
MR.*



Aug. 29/00/0  
M. J. J.

Margl





Agape House Fund  
as of 6/11/95

---

✓ William Berry

✓ Betty Brock

✓ Jan Brooks

✓ Timothy Burkett

✓ Dennis Luft

✓ Carol McKinnon

✓ Steve Parker

✓ Frank Romanowicz

✓ Karen Sparks

Katharine Stewart

BESSEMER • 1819 9TH AVENUE • 424-8285  
SOUTHSIDE • 720 24TH ST. SOUTH • 252-6377  
DOWNTOWN • 211 21ST ST. NORTH • 322-4619  
IRONDALE • 2836 CRESTWOOD BLVD. • 956-9230  
RIVERCHASE • 123 RIVERCHASE VILLAGE • 988-3435







May 19, 1995

Rev. Marge Ragona  
Covenant Metropolitan Community Church  
P.O. Box 101473  
Birmingham, AL 35210

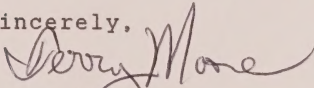
Dear Rev. Ragona,

Thank you for your letter welcoming me to Covenant. I visited the church back in February while visiting in Birmingham with two friends who now attend Covenant. I will visit them again soon and anticipate the opportunity of worshipping with you again. (I have neglected writing this letter a long time.)

I want you to know how much I appreciated the worship service, especially your message and the choir. And I want you to know how much I enjoy receiving your newsletter, which I find to be outstanding in both style and content.

God bless you and Covenant and may God grant you a strong and faithful ministry.

Sincerely,

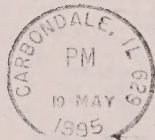


Terry Moore  
Metropolitan Community Church  
of Paducah, Kentucky

*Answered  
6/7/95*







REV. MARGE RAGONA  
COVENANT METROPOLITAN  
COMMUNITY CHURCH  
P.O. BOX 101473  
BIRMINGHAM, AL 35210











4/16/9.

Dear Allen,

I had told Dennis <sup>the other</sup> <sub>age</sub>  
that I had decided  
not to give to the  
Building fund only  
to the Gen. Fund and  
Tuscaloosa Parrish  
Fund.

Please take my name  
off the Building Fund at  
this time. I maybe  
give from time to time  
I do not wish to  
get a Quarterly Report

on how much I  
have or haven't  
given. Please do not  
send these Reports  
to me. Thank you.

Honey L. Begelman

4/16/95

Marge - Honey is obviously  
miffed at getting a quarterly  
statement.

1. - Dennis did not tell me  
about her change in pledge. To  
my knowledge, I'm the only person  
to talk to about pledges or  
personal records.

2. - The reports were run  
en masse. There is no provision  
in the program to run all  
except one person. Please explain  
that if she does not want the  
report, simply trash it.

Alan

2/14/92

Mike - knew is already  
with a group of people  
+ others.

I - know, but not tell me  
about the group in flight. To  
my knowledge, I'm the only person  
to talk about people in  
general terms.

5 - The report was even  
in the paper. There is no  
in the paper to see all  
except one person. Please explain  
that if the data was not the  
report, simply took it.

Allen







61-40 Saunders St. B21  
Rego Park, NY 11374  
(718) 672-7658  
March 9, 1995

Metropolitan Community Church Board:

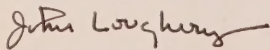
I am writing a book about gay life in postwar America to be published by Henry Holt & Co. in 1997. Though the book deals in part with the rise of the gay political movement, it is also concerned with the social and cultural world of gay men during the last several decades -- and how gay men were perceived by different elements of American society in earlier times and how we came to view ourselves differently over the years. So I have been trying to learn as much as possible about gay social and professional life -- bars, clubs, networks of friends and gay colleagues, difficulties involving the military or employment, relevant stories about family, school, religion, the law, or the forging of gay relationships -- in the 1940s, '50s, and early '60s, particularly in areas other than New York City and San Francisco.

I am writing now to ask if you know of anyone in the area, affiliated with the Church or otherwise, who might be inclined to share their memories about gay life from that earlier time. Previous interviews have been conducted in a variety of ways: by phone or in-person, taped or not, anonymous or otherwise -- whatever was agreeable to the person being interviewed. (The book is a narrative history, rather than a collection of interviews, but the interviews will contribute a great deal to the historical background of the work as a whole.)

I should also say that the interviews do not even have to be personal: I am interested in knowing the basic facts of a given area (for example, what bars existed in what towns at what date, etc.) and would like to talk with someone who has that information.

Any suggestions or research "leads" of any kind will be much appreciated. Though a large part of my work is based in libraries and gay archives, the better and richer part of the experience has been in talking to the individuals I've been put in touch with.

Sincerely,

  
John Loughery









2508 Dublin St  
Ladson AL 35901  
6-7-95

Covenant Metropolitan Community Church  
5117 1st Av N.  
Birmingham, AL 35210

Greetings,

I was very blessed by my visit to your church,

I am looking forward to when I can come again.

At other churches I've been to, I feel so uptight. I have never felt so relaxed or free at a church before.

Sincerely

James Earl Smith

Answered  
7/6/95



James Earl Smith  
2508 Dublin St  
Gadsden AL 35901



Covenant Metropolitan  
Community Church  
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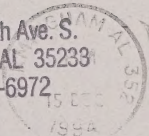








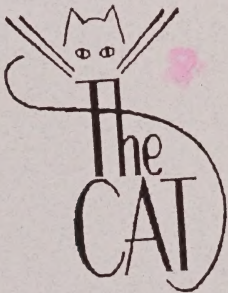
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# Holiday Greetings.

Thank you for your patronage -  
please come by to receive your  
free gift - "Southern Cats" calendar!



Susan, Tom Tingley, Calpurnia



PEACE To You and Yours!

**Tues-Sat**  
**10am-6pm**

Note: Winter  
Hours  
close at 5:15 pm

Subj: Re: MCC in New England  
Date: 94-10-26 22:38:01 EST  
From: JeremyBear

Dear Friends in New England:

I'm a clergyperson transferring my credentials from Lutheran circles to the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (the 25 year-old Christian denomination with a primary outreach to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered persons). As part of that process I'm doing some research about the MCC's growth in different part of the country. Please take the time to respond to the following questions. Your thoughtful responses will be helpful in shaping MCC ministries in New England and elsewhere.

1. What is your general impression of the Metropolitan Community Church as a denomination?  
I'm aware that New England has only a few MCC congregations and that you may not be near any of them.
2. Given that sparse reality, are you aware at all of the MCC's ministry locally? Nationally? Globally?
3. MCC's have had a difficult time finding a niche in New England's gay/lesbian culture. What's your sense of why that is so?
4. What form does your own spirituality take currently?  
Are your spiritual needs being met in significant ways?  
Are they being met in ways that affirm your identity as a gayman, lesbian or other sexual minority?
5. What is your religious/spiritual background?
6. Are you currently part of a Christian community of faith?  
If so, within what tradition? How actively do you participate? Are you "out" at church? Does your congregation do outreach to gay/lesbian people?  
Your denomination?
7. What might you find attractive about being part of a Christian community of faith with a primary outreach to gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered persons?
8. What might you find unattractive about being part of a Christian community of faith with a primary outreach to gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered persons?
9. Please share some general information about yourself.  
Where in New England do you live?  
How do you describe your sexual orientation?  
How old are you?  
How do you make your living?

If you have a chance to pass these questions on to other gay/lesbian New Englanders (either via the Internet or other means) I'd appreciate it. Obviously InterNet'ers can e-mail me at [JeremyBear@AOL.com](mailto:JeremyBear@AOL.com).

Thanks for your time and reflections!

Yours on the Journey Toward Shalom with Justice!

Jeremy





Department of Pastoral Care

September 22, 1995

Dear Pastor,

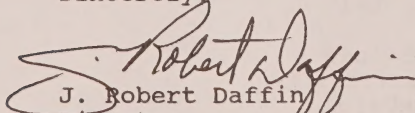
Parking is always a problem at UAB University Hospital! Whenever you come to visit your parishioners in the hospital, it is such a hassle to find a parking place. We are aware of that problem, and appreciate your patience and your commitment to visiting your patients in the hospital. Your ministry to them is vital, and we in the Department of Pastoral Care appreciate your presence.

**Beginning January 1, 1996, all clergy wishing Clergy Parking status will be required to re-register in order to obtain a parking pass.** Even those persons who currently hold a pass must register, as the old passes will no longer be honored by the parking personnel.

As a means of helping you make this transition, The Department of Pastoral Care will host a **"Clergy Appreciation Day"** on Thursday, **October 19th**, from 2:00 P.M. till 3:30 P.M. "Clergy Appreciation Day" will be held in the **Green and Gold Room at the UAB Arena**. During that hour and a half, you will meet and hear from various members of the hospital staff (see schedule on back of this letter), **AND** you will be given the opportunity to register for and receive your **Clergy Parking Pass!** We know that you are busy and that your schedule is tight. We hope that this event will help you. Refreshments will be provided, as well.

Please place **"Clergy Appreciation Day"** on your calendar now, and plan to attend. **To help us plan for your presence, please RSVP by Monday, October 16th, by calling 934-4254.** We will give you instructions regarding parking and directions to the Arena when you call. We look forward to seeing you on October 19th, at 2:00 P.M.

Sincerely,

  
J. Robert Daffin  
Director

## CLERGY APPRECIATION DAY

October 19, 1995  
2:00 P.M. to 3:30 P.M.

**PURPOSE:** To acknowledge the importance of and express our appreciation to local ministers who provide pastoral care to members of their congregations hospitalized at University Hospital.

**PLAN:** An afternoon gathering that will feature:

1. Refreshments
2. Introduction of members of the Department of Pastoral Care
3. Introduction of other hospital personnel:
  - Kevin Lofton, CEO
  - Kay Allen, Volunteers
  - Mary Nash, Nursing Services
  - Tucker Slaughter, Patient Representatives
  - Erma Wesley, Social Services
4. A panel discussion with the above named folks providing orientation to the hospital and various services provided
5. Registration for Clergy Parking Permits

**DATE & TIME:** October 19, 1995      2:00 P.M. to 3:30 P.M.

**PLACE:** The Green and Gold Room at The UAB Arena

### SCHEDULE

|                        |                                                    |
|------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| 2:00 P.M. to 2:30 P.M. | Gathering and Refreshments<br>Parking Registration |
| 2:30 P.M. to 2:40 P.M. | Greetings and Introductions - Bob Daffin           |
| 2:40 P.M. to 2:50 P.M. | Greetings and Remarks - Kevin Lofton               |
| 2:50 P.M. to 3:30 P.M. | Presentations by Panel                             |

### "About University Hospital"

Mary Nash, Nursing Services  
Erma Wesley, Social Services  
Kay Allen, Volunteer Services  
Tucker Slaughter, Patient Representatives

|           |                                            |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------|
| 3:30 P.M. | Dismissal<br>Continue Parking Registration |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------|



# St. Mary's Messenger

## Joint Service Is Powerful

by Mark File

September 24th. What a day! Our first joint service with Resurrection Lutheran. Powerful, amazing, pioneering, encouraging. It's difficult to find the exact words to describe the service, which exemplifies the wonderful relationship we have with Pastor Mark and the folks at Resurrection.

What a thrilling weekend for me. Not only to sing with the St. Mary's Choir in a "mainline denomination" church, but to spend a weekend of praise and fellowship with our singing family.

I'm glad we all are starting to see the big picture: What's important is for everyone to worship God together without judgement toward each other's beliefs or worship practices. And how exciting to blend two different styles of worship!

The commitment of many folks at St. Mary's continues to amaze and inspire me. Several persons spent over 15 hours at the church this weekend. Libby brought her major keyboard and sound system with miles of wires, Phil brought his drums. All of this was disassembled from Libby's house (where the choir had been practicing), and then set up and taken down *twice* at

church. Ron and Sharon led the choir in some powerful music, which no doubt was divinely inspired.

This offered a great (and much needed) reminder for me that God transcends all the hate of our world and all of our daily struggles. So fitting that Ron and Phil played an arousing version of "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God"...

*A mighty fortress is our God,  
A bulwark never failing,  
Our helper God, amid the  
flood of mortal ills prevailing.  
For still our ancient foe  
doth seek to work us woe,  
God's craft and power are  
great.*

*And armed with cruel hate  
On Earth is not God's equal.*

## Journey Circles Continue

The latest series of journey circles continue, and it is not too late to join one near you!

These circles are places to find community and caring. The meetings include time for discussion, prayer and fun. Discussion focuses on issues of spirituality and the ways it relates to our everyday lives and concerns.

Contact the church office to find a circle near you.

## Articles Needed

Remember, this newsletter is YOURS! Articles are needed - up to around 600 words. If you can write an article or just have an idea to pass along, please see Mark File.

## District Conference Heads For The Hills

You truly know that the spirit of the Lord is present when you walk into a large banquet room at a district conference and there are hundreds of people singing, clapping and rejoicing because they know the Lord is in their hearts.

The fall district conference for the Gulf Lower Atlantic District (GLAD) will climb up to Asheville, North Carolina on November 17-19. The GLAD includes around 30 churches in six states: North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and Tennessee. Last fall, many members of St. Mary's traveled down to Wilmington for a great weekend of workshops and powerful worship services, in addition to the many social opportunities with members from the other Metropolitan Community Churches.

"God's Light For A New Generation" is the conference theme. Rev. Elder Jeri Anne Harvey, Rev. Judy Dahl and Rev. Randy Votsch will speak at the three worship services. Also, following Saturday night's service, the host church, MCC Asheville, will put on a musical revue, "Look to the Rainbow."

The beautiful Radisson Hotel will host the conference. Room reservations (\$64 room rate) need to be made by October 16. Be sure to mention that you will be attending the conference to receive the special rate. Conference registration is \$40 if received by November 10. Late registration fee is \$45.

A Friday night dinner (\$20) will feature a special guest speaker. Worship participants are needed, and you can indicate on your registration form if you want to assist. If you are looking for someone to travel with or room with, contact the church office.

## Series to Study Intimacy

Beginning Wednesday, October 18, a new Christian Education Series will begin, titled "The Intimacy Factor". You will see how different personality types act, react and interact in relationships. Both singles and couples are encouraged to come to the series, held 6:30 - 7:45 pm each Wednesday at the church.



**Make  
Plans To  
Attend...**

**GLAD Distict Conference**  
November 17, 18 & 19

**Radisson Hotel**  
Asheville, NC

**Hotel Reservations:**  
1-800-333-3333 (before  
October 16)

**Early Conference fee:**  
\$40.00

**Registration forms at  
church**

*Think about it  
It takes both rain  
and sunshine to  
make a rainbow.*



## OUT OF BOUNDS

by Wes Isley

*Out of Bounds - every game has its rules, and if the ball goes out of bounds, the play stops or starts over. Many want gays and lesbians to remain on a restrictive playing field, and every time we come out we cross those boundaries. That's when the game truly begins for us. We cross those boundaries into freedom - no longer bound by society's shackles. We then see that the playing field is bigger than we thought, and so is our God. Send us your coming out stories. You might even inspire someone else to take that step and go - Out of bounds! I'll go first....*

Coming out is a little like the Roadrunner and Wiley Coyote cartoons. We approach our friends or relatives with a coming out "bomb," light the fuse and dash for cover, hoping the shrapnel doesn't hit us. When we come out to someone, we're always afraid pieces of our little bomb will be hurled back to wound us. Of course, in the cartoons, no one really gets hurt. We often do.

So, I didn't know what to expect when I came out to my college roommate, Steve. During our last conversation, I told Steve I went to "St. Mary's," carefully leaving off the "MCC." I basically avoided the topic of romantic relationships all together.

Two weeks ago I returned his telephone call from Florida, knowing in the back of my mind that it was time to come out. Why? First, I value his friendship. Second, I had to come out for my own self-respect. If I believe God truly accepts me, I should not fear what any mere human will think. And finally, for my spiritually integrity. As a Christian, I believe Christ would have us speak the truth even when it is

uncomfortable.

So I called. We talked about girlfriends, and he asked if I was seeing anyone. Boy did I blow it. I mumbled "Not really".

So much for my little "bomb". Then I took a deep breath, brought the conversation back around to dating, and told him I was seeing someone - another man. Bombs away! Like Wiley Coyote, I covered my head, shut my eyes and waited for the blast. I waited for him to end our friendship.

Surprisingly, it wasn't so bad. He started asking questions - How did I know I was gay? Did I think it was genetic or by environment? We started arguing Bible verses. I tried to challenge his beliefs and show him there might be another viewpoint. We talked for four hours!

Although Steve doesn't agree with me, I believe our friendship is now stronger because I was honest with him, and I let him see the struggles I face as a Christian. It would have been very sad to lose his friendship, but I took strength in knowing that I am part of the St. Mary's family - a family that accepts me and walks beside me. That is so important. Without St. Mary's, I don't believe I would have had the strength to be honest with Steve. There is just one thing I regret about my conversation with Steve - I have to pay that outrageous phone bill!

### Did you Know?

The Bible contains 6 admonishments to homosexuals and 362 admonishments to heterosexuals. That doesn't mean that God doesn't love *heterosexuals*. It's just that they need more supervision.

-Lynne Lavner



Around the  
UFMCC

## Thousands Gather for General Conference

(From article by Steve Warren, Keeping In Touch)

Purchasing property for an international headquarters in West Hollywood, decentralizing bureaucracy to help double the size of member churches in ten years, establishing a Ministry of Justice, planning

to go online and breezing through the least contentious business session in its 27-year history, the UFMCC held General Conference XVII in Atlanta. With increased participation by children and young adults and new leadership emerging from the ranks, the denomination that begun with the aim of becoming obsolete as soon as it had forced mainstream churches to accept lesbians and gays, dug in for the long haul. Rev. Troy Perry led several hundred marchers to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Non-Violent Social Change for an observance at the tomb of the man whose life continues to inspire our movement. "We are the church of Jesus Christ, not just another gay/lesbian organization," Perry says. "We must model health, wholeness and holiness to the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and heterosexual communities."

## Dallas MCC Membership Exceeds 1400

The Cathedral of Hope MCC in Dallas, Texas has grown from 400 members in 1987 to over 1,400 members today. The Rev. Micheal Piazza, pastor, reports that plans are underway for a new sanctuary, to be designed by Mr. Phillip Johnson, designer of Robert Schuller's Crystal Cathedral. Mr. Johnson came out as a gay man in his autobiography a few years ago. The present sanctuary seats 700, but is often crowded with nearly 1,000 attending. Over 2,000 attended their 25th anniversary in July.

## Mel White Asks For Donations

Dr. Mel White, UFMCC's Minister of Justice, needs your assistance in dealing with the religious right. Dr. White is a full-time volunteer, and needs financial gifts to help until the 1996 presidential election. "During the next 15 months, leaders of the radical right will work tirelessly (and spend tens of millions of dollars) to drive God's gay and lesbian children back into our closets," says White. "We must not let that happen." He plans to create JusticeNet to mobilize an interfaith justice network quickly through the internet, phones and faxes; create print, audio and video materials; teach volunteers at seminars; negotiate with extremist Christian leaders; and travel (he has spoken, marched, demonstrated, organized, and fasted in 35 different states and appeared on more than 300 TV and radio talk shows in the past 29 months).

To assist Dr. White or to find out more information, call him at his home (214-878-6908) or write to PO Box 609, Ennis, TX 75120. Please make checks payable to UFMCC. Also: fax 214-875-4858, RevMel@aol.com.



## Focusing On What Is Right

By Rev. Christine Oscar  
I have spent a lot of years in church and fellowship work and one of the things that I have noticed is the fact that many people focus on what the church is not doing or is doing wrong. I think it's time to focus on what we are doing right!

Did you know that in the month of September we served about 50 individuals through our food bank? Did you know that on more than just a few occasions a board member has come over here on a weekend to load food for hungry individuals and families that had no other place to turn? Did you know that some of the families that we serve are now helping with this ministry by going to the Food bank and doing the shopping for us and shelving and organizing the food? This is called empowerment!

Today I received a letter from a man whose father is dying of cancer and received one of our prayer bears. I want to share a part of this letter:

"Once I explained to Dad that the prayer bear brought with it all your prayers and well wishes, it became extremely important to him-in fact, it now has to be near him at all times, giving him great delight to explain its meaning to all his visitors. I have often prayed over prayer bears during my time with MCC, but never realized how wonderful and meaningful they are! Please keep up the tradition-the bears truly create beautiful moments during difficult times."

Then there are the people

that come up to you after their first worship with us that can hardly talk around the tears. "I've been out of church for 5, 10, or 15 years but now I feel like I have 'come home'."

### From the Pastor

A minister from another state and denomination visited the church during the summer, and he wrote back with a donation for the purchase of fifteen music folders for the choir, because he wanted to give back a little of what he had received.

The journey circles are receiving rave reviews from both leaders and participants, who are discovering a deeper sense of community and commitment.

Our music program which struggled for so long and kept running by a dedicated director and a few dedicated individuals, is performing pieces that common sense, or musical sense, says should not be done by a dozen or so folks. And out of faith, friendship, and commitment, the Rainbow Avenue Quartet was created and delight us with their musical presentations.

Are we doing everything right? Not by a long shot! But isn't it nice to know that we are making a difference, right here and right now?

## Prayer Bear Sunday

October 22

Please bring large huggable bears for this important outreach ministry of St. Mary's.

## Board Member Spotlight

(In each newsletter we will feature one of our hard-working board members so you can get to know them better.)



**Dan Triece** is our newest board member, appointed in September to take Jeanne's place on the board after she moved to Florida. He joined St. Mary's this past January. With a Lutheran background, Dan was a member of MCC New Life in Charlotte since 1987.

Dan believes that St. Mary's greatest strength is the people. "I want to help strengthen the ministry of St. Mary's so that everyone who has need of help may be served," says Dan. "My door is open, and my phone works from 9:30 am until 11:30 pm. Communication is important if we all are to prosper as the body of Christ."

A potter in Seagrove, Dan enjoys music and showing dogs, particularly St. Bernards. He even has a St. Bernard inside his pottery store! He is currently dating Jack Wilson from Kentucky and is awaiting Jack's move here.

## HIV Support Group Plans To Begin

A HIV/AIDS support group plans to begin meeting at St. Mary's on Wednesday's at 11 am. The group will be for people both infected and affected by HIV and AIDS, and will meet the needs of those who cannot attend other area evening support groups. Contact the church office at 297-4054 for the latest details.

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## Let us Know!

- ◆ Want to be added/deleted from our mailing list?
- ◆ Have an address correction?
- ◆ Want to support the newsletter financially through donation or advertisements - \$10 per issue for business card size.

Please circle request above and mail to:

Newsletter/St. Mary's MCC

PO Box 10943, Greensboro, NC 27404

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_  
State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone (optional) \_\_\_\_\_



## *Coping With Grief and Bereavement*

*a one day seminar*

**Saturday, October 21**

**8:30 am until 2 pm**

Sponsored by St. Mary's MCC  
at Lutheran Church of the Resurrection  
6720 W. Friendly Avenue, Greensboro

Facilitated by Rev. Christine Oscar

Cost: \$20/MCC Member, \$25/Non-member

Includes continental breakfast and lunch  
noone will be turned away for lack of funds, but  
you still must register

For further information call 297-4054

*"Not everything that is faced can be changed, but  
nothing can be changed until it is faced."*



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## **Worship and Social Opportunities**

### **SUNDAYS**

5:30 pm - Choir Practice

7:00 pm - Evening Worship at Resurrection Lutheran  
Building at 6720 West Friendly Ave

### **MONDAYS**

7:30 pm - J&S Cafeteria food and fellowship

**FRIDAYS:** Bridge Group- see Micky for details

### **Through Early November:**

Journey Circles begin meeting in Greensboro, Winston-  
Salem, High Point and Seagrove

### **First Sunday of each month:**

Food Bank Sunday

### **October 18:**

6:30 pm: "The Intimacy Factor" series begin.

### **October 21:**

Coping With Grief and Bereavement Seminar

### **October 22:**

Prayer Bear Sunday

### **November 5:**

Congregational Meeting after church service

*Call the church office for details - 297-4054*

*Office hours: Monday & Wednesday 9-2,*

*Tuesday & Thursday 1-5.*

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**JAMES S. M. SINGLETON**

To: Miss Elizabeth, Kinko's  
Fr: J.S.M. Singleton  
Re: Building inspection services

Criterion-Carlisle Engineers  
/44.5004

Southeast Building Inspections  
631.5533

In retaining a building inspection service, you would want to consider the resume of the person undertaking the inspection, and, in addition, any references from previous clients of the service.

A state license, bond, and errors and omission/liability insurance are a necessity in retaining any service. The service should furnish photocopies of these items to you by your request.





2518 Marlins Drive  
Columbia SC 29204  
23 October 1995

What a happy dilemma you posed!

I'm sure you know that \$50 out of the clear blue sky is an unimaginable blessing, an amazing, unlooked for wealth. But what to do with it? Ah there's the question.

PWAs -- or this one at least -- soon learn to cut back, cut down, to want less. Things one used to suppose "I just gotta have it" seem to diminish in both urgency and interest. Perhaps it's an aspect of the grace of beginning to let go. I told Ken Sapp years ago that when he came to bury me (and in fact I buried him 5 years ago) he'd need a bull dozer. Why? he wondered. I said to dig a hole big enough for me and all this shit.

I do wonder sometimes what to do to pre-arrange the disposition of many things i've lived with and cherished for years. And honestly I have no answers. I fondly hope they don't wind up underpriced at a second hand furniture store! But I don't know who wants them or even who has room for them! In any case, I daresay I'll neither know nor care in whatever realm the angels bear me to.

Oh, I know, and I rejoice to know, that realm will be in the Bosom of God where all will be well. But from present perspective in this world one can't help wondering. Is that faithless?

It's a great joy to learn of the building purchase program! How well I remember the yeasty excitement (and trepidation) in which we bought our building in Nashville in 1980. It was the second such community owned building in the South! We felt right proud of ourself! It was lost a few years ago when someone named Vicky made a total mess of things, and I was sorry about that, believe me. But it's rather like my dilemma of my own possessions, isn't it? Do we all need to practice letting go? practice returning to God the favors and blessings which were so welcome?

Anyhow, God bless you and the congregation and the effort! May your new Church be a blessing to all who turn to it! Add may they crowd its seating capacity!

As for choir directors: they come and go, never soon enough in either case. Your devoted "Pappy" has no wisdom for you, but to remember that you can't please the implacable, satisfy the insatiable, or ease those who enjoy being distraught at having caused problems. Bless him and let him go. (Remembering, you can't do the one without doing the other ....)

I, too, remember 14th Street. Remember with fondness and joy. I could use some more of that! But the "grizzled self" you speak of it more "grizzled" than you'd suppose. I inadvertently saw my face in a mirror the other day it was an old man looking back at me, an old man. As a comfort I find he still looks like he did when he was young, he's still me. But it was a shock.

Thank you again, dear friend, for your generous gift! I'll find something good to do with it, I assure you, and I'll let you know what that is.









*All Things Are Possible!*  
*Mark 9:23*

15 SEPTEMBER 1995

Dear Friends:

"Once we were not a people, a people now are we..." this is certainly truth for us in Metropolitan Community Churches. This October we celebrate God's faithfulness to us in the twenty seventh anniversary of the founding of our denomination. For some of us that is a standard annual celebration which we have participated in for years. For others, it may well be the first opportunity to celebrate this liberation anniversary with us.

This year the Board of Elders have named Global Outreach as the recipient of the special offering which we have traditionally requested of our member churches, any Sunday in October.

We hope you will share this celebration with your church. We pray you will select a Sunday in October in which to collect a special offering for those many around the globe who are our people... who need and want to know we are a people now!

We thank you for the many ways in which you bless our lives and this denomination with your gifts and generous spirit. We thank you for your willingness to share once again with our sisters and brothers around the globe.

Please place the enclosed poster in a location which will inform your church of this important celebration event **with the date of your choice**. In addition, we ask you to distribute the enclosed bulletin insert with your Sunday service.

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

Yours in celebration and love,

Rev. Elder Troy D. Perry  
Founder, Moderator

Rev. Judy Dahl  
Global Outreach Administrator

**UFMCC**

5300 Santa Monica  
Suite 304  
Los Angeles  
CA 90029 USA

Tel (213) 464-5100  
Fax (213) 464-2123



Marge,

I wanted to thank you & tell you how much I appreciated the study on the Bible & homosexuality. I had been putting off that last membership class because I wanted to do some studying on my own first; plus, for the past 10 years I have been involved in a very conservative evangelical church & I was led to believe that gay people make the Bible say what they want it to say. My only defense until recently was that when I die or Christ returns, I will go to heaven because of my faith in Christ, not because of what I did or did not do. But I wanted more of a defense than that for when I have contact with my friends from my "former life." I did a lot of word studies using a concordance & studying the biblical context of those passages. I was surprised to find that in most cases the words were abusive & degrading - nothing like what I have experienced. Your study gave me so much more to go on. It's all so factual & rational - there's no making any of it up. I think that because of it, I feel more settled with myself & my beliefs and also closer to God because the barriers that separated me from having the intimate relationship with Him that I used to have were removed.

I'm excited about what God is doing in and through MCC & I'm glad to be a part of it. Thanks for all you do, Marge.

Love in Christ, Bernadette

*For Every Day*

*Trusting His love  
to touch your day*



"... So great is His unfailing love!"

LAMENTATIONS 3:32 NIV



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|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Time In<br><input type="checkbox"/> AM <input type="checkbox"/> PM               | Military<br><input type="checkbox"/> 2nd Day <input type="checkbox"/> 3rd Day    | Return Receipt                              |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Weight<br>5.5 lbs oz                                                             | Int'l Alpha Country Code<br>HAM                                                  | C.O.D.                                      |
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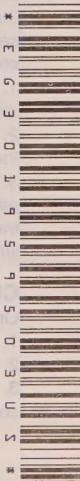
Rev. Jay Neely

GLAD

410 1st Mcc

1379 Tullie Rd NE

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January 24, 1995

Rev. Ruth Harper  
2201 Lynnwood Avenue  
Wilmington, NC 28403

Dear Rev. Harper:

As you can see from above, I am another MCC pastor who heard you speak at our Wilmington conference. I am the daughter of a Methodist pastor and grand neice of a Methodist bishop, Charles Wesley Flint.

Saturday, I had an opportunity to speak to a group of Methodists at the new and somewhat experimental Methodist Church of the Reconciler here in downtown Birmingham while they were doing their study on homosexuality. I felt that I had to say something to you, and to their pastor Lawton Higgs, about your stance in favor of gay people in the church.

I cannot thank you enough for speaking out on our behalf. I spent 12 years as a religious education director in a Southern Baptist Church before coming to MCC nearly 21 years ago. I remember those as very frightened years, hoping that no one would ever guess at my secret life. My lover at the time and I were both teachers in the New Orleans schools and I was raising three children. Coming out, I thought, would have been disastrous! So do the many who are hiding in the church and need to know that they are all right with God.

Kathi Beall told us, in a letter, of your encounter with hate-filled people who told you that people such as us would have been stoned in Old Testament times. I gratefully acknowledge that Jesus would probably have done differently -- at least we have his model in the woman taken in adultery. When will the church learn that its task is to be redemptive rather than condemnatory? At least we know that there are pastors and district superintendents who are like you and that all is not hopeless. Know that there are many in MCC who are thankful for your presence and pray for your safety.

Accept our love and thanks.

In Christ,

Rev. Marge Ragona









## ST. JUDE'S MCC

507 Castle Street

Wilmington, NC

(910) 762-JUDE

Mailing Address:

4326 Market Street

Suite 170

Wilmington, NC 28403

December 12, 1994

Dear Saints:

I know that you and your church members received as much of a blessing hearing Rev. Ruth Harper's wonderful affirming and loving message on Nov. 11 as I did. Ruth has shared with me, and with many of her friends at St. Jude's that she considers that Friday night service the high point in her ministry. While she has received some support from her denomination for her participation in our conference, she has also received a fair amount of grief.

Ruth visited with her St. Jude's family recently after having a couple accost her earlier in the day at one of the churches in her district. Ruth shared with us that she held her own until one of the two snarled, "Don't you know that in Old Testament times, 'those people' would have been stoned?" At that point, Ruth had the mental image of people she loved being killed in hate, and she left the encounter in tears.

I am writing because I believe that for every negative comment, for every insult and harrassing call Ruth receives regarding her sharing with us, she should receive an expression of love from someone who was blessed by her message. Please take the time to write her a personal note to that effect if you feel so moved, and encourage those from your church who attended the Friday worship service to do so as well. Her address is: Rev. Ruth Harper, 2201 Lynnwood Ave., Wilmington, NC 28403.

Thank you for your consideration of my request.

On behalf of the congregants of St. Jude's, let me also thank all those who participated in the Conference here, and who made us feel so good about the work we did. Please feel free to call upon us if you should visit the area again.

May our loving God bless your church as we have been blessed.

Yours in the service of our Savior,

Pastor Kathi Beall □

S e r v i n g   t h e   G o d   o f   A L L   p e o p l e









The Birmingham News  
2200 Fourth Avenue North  
Birmingham, AL 35210

Dear Editor:

The Birmingham News, Friday, January 13, 1995, ran an article entitled "God disapproves of homosexuality, and you can look it up." The writer of the article bears out entirely what "Dear Abby" was saying: Homophobia is the spreading of misinformation regarding homosexuality due to ignorance or misunderstanding of the homosexual community.

Sexual orientation is established either at birth or so early in childhood that there is no hope of changing it. Many "ex-gays" (and I was one) later find that even prayer and conversion cannot reestablish one's sexuality. They later find that they have been duped, often at great cost (\$12,000, in my case), by counselors and/or psychotherapists, who tell them they can change their sexual orientation. They cannot. They merely cease to act on their God-given sexuality and act as heterosexuals, mainly out of taught guilt. To this date, only about 1% of gay people who have been to "Christian counselors" have been "changed," and many of them were not of homosexual orientation, merely acting homosexually for economic or other reasons. Many later return to the gay community, but they are now parents and divorced husbands and wives (as I am). Our church daily tries to restore these people to wholeness. Truly gay people do not change, despite contentions otherwise.

Homosexuality is not mentioned in the Bible. The Bible was written many millenia ago, and the word homosexuality was not coined until the 1860s. Biblical writers could have known nothing about homosexuality as it is understood today. What they wrote about were male-to-male sexual acts for the purpose of idol worship and scripture forbade these. Male-to male-sexual acts were forbidden because of the improper use of "seed" (semen), which was thought to contain the whole person. Persons were needed by the small group who were trying to conquer a land which was not their own but which, they believed, had been given them by God. To "use" a male as a woman was to degrade him to the status of chattel, as women were. Today we believe that women are also worthy in God's sight. The other references which are taught to be about homosexuality have to do with religious practices (idolatry) which were "not done in Israel" (the meaning of "abomination" according to my Old Testament professor at Boston University School of Theology).

God is not a tyrant, is not capricious, and does not give us our sexuality and demand that we not use it. Just as heterosexuals are given the gift of their sexuality and asked to use it





responsibly, so are homosexuals. No one would choose to be shunned, oppressed, and even killed unless their sexuality was so deeply ingrained that it could not be changed. I pastor a church where many have prayed, had conversion experiences, been in psychotherapy, attempted suicide, and undergone electric shock treatments, hoping to have their homosexuality removed. Eventually, they came to know that God is good and merciful. They have learned that their homosexuality is a rich part of who they are, and is created by God, with the understanding that they, like everyone else, use it ethically. The Bible says nothing about the chosenness of homosexuality. To say that it does is to read into scripture our own prejudices. The writer quotes Romans 1, which Paul wrote to speak to the adherents of the mystery religions. These were phallus worshipers who believed in dying and rising agricultural gods. Paul spoke against the use of the carved phalli ("resembling a mortal human being, birds, four-footed animals or reptiles") which were being used in the orgies, and stated that they would receive in their bodies the recompense for their idolatry which was the self-inflicted castration which they performed to become one with the god. This had nothing to do with homosexuality, but was about heterosexual fertility rites. Abominations, in the Bible, always relate to things which were done in the framework of the religions of the time and place in which the Bible was written.

People today eat shrimp and catfish, wear mixed wool and other fabric suits, cotton and linen shirts, and eat rare steaks, all abominations in Leviticus. The only abomination they seem to feel worth forcing on others is the prohibition of men lying with men. Paul, as I remember, tells us that we are all under grace and freed from this law because of Jesus' act on Calvary. Whether a person's sin is seen as homosexuality or is the sin of pride and condemnation of another (which Jesus spoke against in Luke 18:10-14), both are redeemed by the Christ, who took on the sins of the world.

We are discovering that some forms of alcoholism (which the writer also seems to think is chosen) are genetically derived. Many other aberrations are the product of children's mistreatment within the home, where most pedophilia, child molestation and child abuse occurs, overwhelmingly by heterosexuals, many of whom consider themselves to be good Christians. The teaching of hatred is not biblical, yet is excused and bolstered by an appeal to scripture. Jesus said, "Judge not, lest ye be judged," and reminded the religious people of his day to avoid phariseism. Somehow, I believe that a society with a small percentage of homosexuals is to be preferred to a society of the self-righteous, who claim to speak for God and misquote scripture to their own ends. If homosexuals were not so condemned by the religiously righteous, there might not be the internalization of homophobia. The self-destructive acts might not happen. Yes, they might even celebrate their sexuality and use it wisely and healthily. Fortunately, the Bible is good news even for the homosexual, and not the "bad news" of condemnation that many preach under the name of gospel. Our church is in the business of salvation for everyone, including homosexuals. We welcome all those who have been oppressed by the unbiblical message given by our society, often for financial gain at the expense of others. We celebrate our sexuality, and vow to use it wisely, and pray that people afflicted with homophobia will be cured, because they are more dangerous to the body politic than are God's good gay people.





*Rev. Marge Ragona is the pastor of Covenant Metropolitan Community Church, a church which welcomes all people and has a special outreach to the gay and lesbian community.*

Very sincerely yours,

Rev. Marge Ragona







# God disapproves of homosexuality, and you can look it up

By **Ralph Woerner**

Last week the "Dear Abby" column in *The Birmingham News* carried a letter from an Orange County lesbian. She claimed that anyone who opposes homosexual behavior is a homophobic — one who spreads misinformation because of his/her ignorance and misunderstanding of the homosexual community.

In her letter this Orange County lesbian asserted that a person's sexual orientation — be it heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual — is predetermined by God. And since no one has the ability to change his or her God-given sexual orientation, homosexuality should be viewed as a gift from God which should be "celebrated" rather than reprieved.

## Genetically predetermined

Abby agreed, saying that she has always believed that one's sexual orientation is genetically predetermined before birth and that homosexuals have suffered far too long because of fear, ignorance and prejudice. Then Abby went on to state that

"homosexuals are born — not made."

If I were a homosexual, I'd be delighted to have Abby standing by my side and approving my behavior. After all, she's a highly respected person who wields a very wide influence in society.

There are a few questions, however, that I would like to ask — which Abby and her correspondent failed to address. The first one is: If God predetermines one's sexuality, and homosexuality should therefore be celebrated rather than reprieved, why is it that every time homosexuality is mentioned in scripture it is condemned rather than applauded? Whose benchmark are we going to use to measure the rightness or wrongness of homosexual behavior: Abby's or God's?

Either Abby and the homosexual community haven't done their homework or they've convinced themselves that they know more about the rightness and wrongness of their behavior than those who penned the scriptures.

If homosexuality has been genetically predetermined before birth by God (as the Orange County lesbian claimed), why on earth does God condemn homosexual behavior in his Word? What kind of tyrant would he be if he saddled a person with homosexual desires and then condemned

him for fulfilling them? Is it possible that homosexuality is a sinful behavior which is chosen? Is it possible that when Abby evaluates homosexuality she is looking through a lens which is colored by her own emotions and prejudices?

Abby's love and compassion for homosexuals is to be commended. God loves them too, and wants to free them from their enslavement. And so should the rest of us. When Abby claims that homosexuals are born, not made, she's merely expressing an opinion for which she has no scientific evidence. The Bible clearly indicates that homosexuality is a chosen behavior which is wrong in the sight of God, and for which an individual is fully responsible.

At this point one can claim that scripture is false — that God didn't inspire it. But he can't say the Bible doesn't condemn homosexual behavior and be truthful about it. He can spit on the scriptures and hope that those who penned them will be sent to hell; but he can't say that scripture doesn't condemn homosexual behavior and be truthful about it, as the following passages prove: "Because they did not like to retain God in their knowledge," scripture says, "their foolish hearts were darkened. Wherefore God also gave them up to

uncleanness through the lust of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves. God gave them up to vile affections, for even their women did exchange the natural use for that which is against nature; and likewise also the men leaving the natural use of the women burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working that which is unseemly" (Romans 1:18-32).

"Thou shalt not lie with mankind as with womenkind . . . if a man lie with mankind as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination" (Leviticus 18:22). Homosexual behavior, as it is described here, doesn't sound to me like something which should be celebrated.

Abby and her Orange County correspondent are also wrong in claiming that one's sexual orientation cannot be changed. Thousands of homosexuals, through prayer and counseling, have been freed from their homosexual enslavement — have gotten married — and are now living happy heterosexual lives.

It may ease a person's conscience to say that homosexuality is genetically caused. But it's a false and risky claim to make. Let's suppose, for instance, that science found a cure for the genetic defect which

supposedly exists and could turn homosexuals into heterosexuals overnight. How many homosexuals would welcome such a cure? Moreover, if the homosexual genetic defect could be treated before birth, in 70 years the problem would vanish. Would this be a breakthrough which homosexuals would welcome or resist? The only reason they would resist is because it is a chosen behavior.

## Excuse or justify

One other thing which needs to be mentioned is: if homosexuals can excuse or justify their behavior on the ground of being born the way they are, couldn't alcoholics, liars, thieves, child molesters, pedophiles, murderers, criminals and rapists make the same claim for themselves? Couldn't every kind of reprehensible behavior be excused by simply claiming that this is the way one was born? If we buy into this kind of logic, are we prepared to accept the kind of society this would bring?

*Ralph Woerner is managing editor of Gospel Publishing Association in Birmingham. He wrote this for The News.*





Friday, January 13, 1995

The Birmingham News

## OTHER VOICES

## God disapproves of homosexuality, and you can look it up

By David Sperling

**L**et's get this straight: There is no scientific evidence that homosexuality is a genetic defect. There is no scientific evidence that homosexuality is a chosen behavior. There is no scientific evidence that homosexuality is a mental illness. There is no scientific evidence that homosexuality is a lifestyle choice. There is no scientific evidence that homosexuality is a sin.

To say it like that, however, might lead some to believe that a person's sexual orientation is a neutral, unchangeable fact — which, of course, it is not. And since no one has the ability to change his or her God-given sexual orientation, homosexuality should be viewed as a gift from God which should be "celebrated" rather than reproved.

## Genetically predetermined

Abby agreed, saying that she has always believed that one's sexual orientation is genetically predetermined before birth and that homosexuals have suffered far too long because of fear, ignorance and prejudice. Then Abby went on to state that

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If I were a homosexual, I'd be delighted to have Abby standing by my side and approving my behavior. After all, she's a highly respected person who wields a very wide influence in society.

There are a few questions, however, that I would like to ask — which Abby and her correspondent failed to address. The first one is: If God predetermines one's sexuality, and homosexuality should therefore be celebrated rather than reproved, why is it that every time homosexuality is mentioned in scripture it is condemned rather than applauded? Where benchmarks are we going to use to measure the rightness, or wrongness, of homosexual behavior, Abby or I or you?

Either Abby and the homosexual community haven't done their homework, or they've convinced themselves that they know more about the rightness and wrongness of their behavior than those who penned the scriptures.

Homosexuality is a fact which homosexuals cannot deny. But it is not a fact which homosexuals can celebrate.

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something which should be celebrated. And it is not Orange County, California, which is also wrong in claiming that one's sexual orientation cannot be changed. Thousands of homosexuals, through therapy and counseling, have been cured from their homosexual enslavement and are now married — and are now living happy heterosexual lives.

If, then, since a person's conscience to say that homosexuality is genetically caused and is a choice and risky claim to make, let's suppose, for instance, that science shows it to be the genetic defect which homosexuality carries and could turn homosexuals into heterosexuals overnight, how many homosexuals would welcome such a cure? Moreover, if the homosexual genetic defect could be treated before birth in 70 years the problem would vanish. Would this be a breakthrough which homosexuals would welcome or resist? The only reason they would resist is because it is a chosen behavior.

## Excuse or justify

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Ralph Woerner is managing editor of Gospel Publishing Association in Birmingham. He wrote this for The News.

Gary Walls

290-0499(h)

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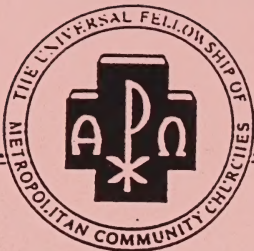


The Metropolitan Community Church

P. O. Box 60406

Nashville, Tennessee 37206

(615) 251-9057



Rev. Dr. Rembert S. Truluck, Senior Pastor

January 30, 1995

Rev. Marge Ragona  
Covenant MCC  
P.O. Box 101473  
Birmingham, AL 35210

Dear Marge:

Here is resume and picture. Also enclosed is handout material to use in the workshop on Saturday. I would like for everyone at the workshop to have a copy. You might want to make some extra copies if you want to have them on hand.

Also enclosed is my U.F.M.C.C. brochure, "HOMOSEXUALITY: THE BIBLE AS YOUR FRIEND -- A Guide for Lesbians and Gays," which can be secured from Fellowship offices in Los Angeles. I would like for you to have enough of them for everyone at the Sunday service and at the workshop. I have included a copy of the folder that we use to invite people to come to MCC Nashville. Make copies of it with your Covenant MCC information in place of my MCC Nashville material if you want to. It would be good if each person at the workshop could have a copy.

I really look forward to seeing you and your partner and sharing ministry with you and your people!! My prayers and the prayers of the people at MCC Nashville will be with you and Covenant MCC as we prepare for the special weekend and as you celebrate your anniversary. Please pray for me and for us. We are growing in Christ and in stability as a church. God has opened many doors of opportunity, and I feel good about myself and about the ministry here. God has given me a wonderful partner to share my life and ministry. Tony has changed me in many ways for the better! There were times when ANY change in me would have been for the better!

With love and prayers,

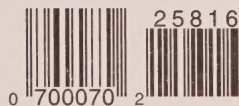
Rev. Dr. Rembert S. Truluck











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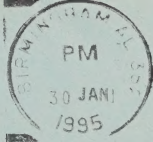


It's people like you  
who make the world better  
by all of the kind  
things you do.

You showed me you cared  
just by thinking of me,  
and I'll always be  
grateful to you.

I enjoyed your visit &  
appreciate your prayers  
during my hospitalization  
Cora Baynell

Bagenell  
305 Westwood Dr.  
Blom., Al. 35215



Rev. Marge Ragano  
Covenant Met. Community Church  
P.O. Box 101473  
Blom., Al. 35210

Wm  
Hallmark









Department of Medicine

Wednesday, December 07, 1994

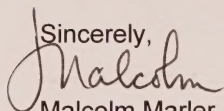
Rev. Marge Ragona  
Covenant Metropolitan Community Church  
5117 First Avenue North  
Birmingham, AL

Dear Marge:

I've now had a moment to catch my breath from a busy week with World AIDS Day and want to say thank you. Thank you for participating in our Interfaith Memorial Service. Your presence made our service more meaningful. There were twice the number present, approximately 300, than last year. More importantly, it was a very meaningful time for people living with HIV and those affected.

It is a real privilege to serve in the same community with you. I hope we have many more opportunities to work together. Peace to you.

Sincerely,



Malcolm Marler  
Chaplain, 1917 Clinic











METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH  
OF OMAHA

*"CELEBRATING LIFE IN CHRIST"*

819 South 22nd Street

Telephone (402) 345-2563

Mail: P.O. Box 3173, Omaha, Ne. 68103

December 6, 1994

WORSHIP

Sunday Mornings

at 9:00 a.m.  
& 10:30 a.m.

Monthly on the 1st  
Sunday Evening  
at 6:00 p.m.

Dear Bothers and Sisters in Christ,

Metropolitan Community Church of Omaha is seeking a Senior Pastor to guide our congregation as we make the transition from a medium-sized church to a large church with multiple areas of ministry.

We have enclosed a brochure which will give you some basic information about our church, our local community, and the area in which we are located. Please review this brochure and feel free to share the information with any credentialed clergy in your congregation.

By January 20, 1994, persons who are interested in applying for the position of Senior Pastor or who would like more information should phone Peggy Hausmann at (712) 322-8710 or write

R.N. Hedges  
Pastoral Search Committee  
6510 Charles St.  
Omaha, NE 68132

May God bless you in all your endeavors.

Sincerely,

Peggy Hausmann & R.N. Hedges  
Co-Chairs, Pastoral Search Committee

# METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH

OF OMAHA

1111 BROADWAY, SUITE 1000

OMAHA, NEBRASKA 68102

TEL: 402-342-1111 FAX: 402-342-1112



October 10, 1998

Dear Sirs:

Thank you for your letter of September 15, 1998.

We are sorry to hear that you are having trouble with your computer.

We will be happy to help you with your computer.

Sincerely,

Rev. David J. Johnson

Executive Director

Metropolitan Community Church of Omaha

1111 Broadway, Suite 1000

Omaha, Nebraska 68102

Phone: 402-342-1111

Fax: 402-342-1112

E-mail: djohnson@metcom.org

Web: www.metcom.org

Metropolitan Community Church of Omaha

1111 Broadway, Suite 1000

Omaha, Nebraska 68102

Phone: 402-342-1111

Fax: 402-342-1112

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Phone: 402-342-1111

Fax: 402-342-1112

E-mail: djohnson@metcom.org

Web: www.metcom.org

Metropolitan Community Church of Omaha

1111 Broadway, Suite 1000

Omaha, Nebraska 68102



## OUR CHURCH

Metropolitan Community Church of Omaha was chartered in 1974. Church membership is 147 with an average Sunday morning attendance of 121 for two services. Once a month there is an evening service.

Our 1995 budget is \$90,098. We purchased our church building in 1992. The brick structure has a sanctuary seating capacity of 152 with a balcony extending the seating to 210. There are a pastor's office, clerical office, food pantry, kitchen and large fellowship hall. The "Meditation Garden," a city block long, adjoins the church. Nature abounds!!

Our philosophy of ministry encourages belief and growth in Christian love through the Holy Spirit. We affirm the priesthood of all believers and encourage each person to practice their ministry on an individual basis, to the edification of the body of Christ.

MCC Omaha's ministries include:

- Sunday worship services
- Adult and children's Sunday school
- Prayer/Share/Care groups
- Deacons' Ministry
- Bible studies
- AIDS ministry and visitation
- Hospital visitation
- Choir
- Inquirers/membership classes
- Food Pantry
- Excel Weekends and specialized workshops
- Gay & lesbian/women's support groups
- MCC Messenger monthly newsletter

## OUR COMMUNITY

Though Omaha is in a conservative part of the country, our gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community is becoming increasingly active and visible. Omaha acts as a magnet for many people moving from smaller rural communities.

MCC-Omaha is a member of a structured group of organizations, businesses and individuals called ANGLE (Achieving New Gay and Lesbian Endeavors), which meets monthly to network and plan consciousness raising activities. Omaha shows greater pride each year through a celebration that culminates in our ever-growing Pride Parade, rally and community picnic. Gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, other supportive individuals and organizations participate in the annual Pride activities.

MCC-O has a strong working relationship with more than 20 organizations and seven bars that reach out to the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender communities. Many organizations support MCC-O through benefit fund-raisers, food drives and other activities.

The Omaha community is actively involved in fund-raising, educational activities, direct care and support of people living with HIV/AIDS. MCC-O's food pantry serves as a primary resource for the Nebraska AIDS Project.

## OUR CITY

Omaha, Nebraska is large enough to offer a wide variety of cosmopolitan activities yet is small enough to provide a relaxed lifestyle. The Omaha/Council Bluffs, Iowa metropolitan area has an estimated 1994 population of 656,400, with more than 1 million people living within a 50-mile radius.

Omaha has a growing economy. Employment opportunities exist in the areas of education, insurance, health care services, railroads, telemarketing, construction, manufacturing, retail and service industries. Omaha's unemployment is below the national average at only 3.4 percent. Our community is served by major airlines and AMTRAK. Centrally located between each coast, Omaha is within a day's drive to Denver, Chicago, Minneapolis and Kansas City.

Omaha is home to the University of Nebraska at Omaha, Creighton University and the University of Nebraska Medical Center, as well as technical schools and other colleges.

Omaha offers an opportunity to experience a wide variety of social and cultural activities. Take your pick of the theater, opera, ballet, symphony, many concerts and art events. See the Joslyn Art Museum, world-renowned Henry Doorly Zoo or world premieres at the Orpheum Theatre. For the sports-minded, Omaha offers semi-professional hockey, basketball and baseball. Outdoor fun opportunities such as boating, fishing, hiking, camping and swimming abound in and around the city.



## OUR CALL

We are seeking a Christ-centered individual to serve as our full-time senior pastor. This person should be able to work with people from various socio-economic and religious backgrounds who are at different stages in their Christian walk. We seek Biblical and spiritual growth. We seek a pastor who will challenge and empower us, as laity, to develop and carry out our own ministries within our church and daily lives. We seek a person who can lovingly guide us to grow together in Christ.

The pastor we seek should relate well with others not only within the gay/lesbian community, but the non-gay community as well. This person needs to be able to work with and minister to those with differing points of view.

The person we seek as pastor must have demonstrated: the ability to preach and teach; the ability to manage personnel and to complete administrative tasks; the ability to train and to delegate; and a commitment to inclusivity. This person should also have demonstrated skills as a confidential counselor, friend and guide.

## BENEFITS

- A financial package of \$24,000 annually includes salary and housing allowance.
- Health Insurance.
- Twenty working days paid vacation per year.
- Floating holidays of nine working days per year.
- Six sick days per year.
- Paid conference expenses.
- Consideration to pay for continuing education.

From the congregation, the pastor shall receive respect, support, enthusiasm, love and commitment to grow together through the love and grace of God.

For an application form please contact:

R.N. Hedges  
6510 Charles Street  
Omaha, NE 68132

or call

Peggy Hausmann  
(712) 322-8710



METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY

Church of Omaha

Celebrating Life in Christ

Invites you to share  
our VISION and  
our MINISTRY

## MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Metropolitan Community Church of Omaha is to encourage RECONCILIATION TO GOD THROUGH RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST. We advocate that such a relationship be built upon personal devotion, community life and active service.









# Covenant Metropolitan Community Church

Rev. Marge Ragona  
Pastor

February 17, 1995

Ms. Cassandra Barnes  
427 Wren Avenue  
Hueytown, AL 35023

Dear Cassandra:

I'm sorry I'm so late in answering your letter, but our Church Clerk picks up the mail and this is his busy time of the year (just before income tax time) and he was late picking up at the post office.

I am disturbed that you are letting a very small passage of the Bible, written thousands of years ago disturb your walk with God and give you so little peace of mind. That is not what God intended scripture to do for us. Leviticus was written at a peculiar time in Israel's history. They had just been released from captivity and were afraid of God, feeling that if they made any kind of mistake, God might condemn them back to captivity. They felt they had to adhere to the minutiae of the law in order to gain God's favor. This was still the situation with the scribes and Pharisees when Jesus appeared on the scene, preaching God's love, not legalism, as the way to God's heart.

We can get very caught up in the eight little passages of scripture that people have used to condemn homosexuality. But Paul reminds us that we are not under the law, we are under grace or Calvary would be of no effect. I refuse to believe that to be true. I am under grace and covered by the blood of Jesus -- or I could not preach the gospel as I believe it.

You, too, are under that grace. Romans 8: 14ff says:

"For those who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a spirit of adoption, through which we cry, 'Abba, Father'" The Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, and joint heirs with Jesus, if only we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him."

Paul, in that same chapter (vs. 32) later says:

Who will bring a charge against God's chosen ones? It is God who acquits us.  
Who will condemn? It is Christ Jesus who died, rather, was raised, who is also at the right hand of God, who intercedes for us. What will separate us from the love



# First Covenant Metropolitan Community Church

Rev. Mary R. Goss  
Pastor

February 17, 1995

Mrs. Cassandra Barnes  
457 West Avenue  
Hueytown, AL 35023

Dear Cassandra:

I'm sorry I'm so late in answering your letter, but our Church Clerk picks up the mail and this is his busy time of the year (just before income tax time) and he was late picking up at the post office.

I am disturbed that you are telling a very small passage of the Bible, written thousands of years ago, disturb your walk with God and give you so little peace of mind. That is not what God intended scripture to do for us. I envision was written at a peculiar time in Israel's history. They had just been released from captivity and were afraid of God, feeling that if they made any kind of mistake, God might condemn them back to captivity. They felt they had to adhere to the minutiae of the law in order to gain God's favor. This was still the situation with the scribes and Pharisees when Jesus appeared on the scene, preaching God's love, not legalism, as the way to God's heart.

We can get very caught up in the eight little passages of scripture that people have used to condemn homosexuality. But Paul reminds us that we are not under the law, we are under grace or Calvary would be of no effect. I refuse to believe that to be true. I am under grace and covered by the blood of Jesus — or I could not preach the gospel as I believe it. You, too, are under that grace. Romans 8: 1-11 says:

"For those who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear; but you received a spirit of adoption, through which we cry, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs; and joint heirs with Jesus, if only we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him."

Paul, in that same chapter (vs. 32) later says:

Who will bring a charge against God's chosen ones? It is God who acquits us. Who will condemn? It is Christ Jesus who died, rather, was raised, who is also at the right hand of God, who intercedes for us. What will separate us from the love

of Christ? ... For I am convinced, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

My faith convinces me that if I am a Christian, I do not trust in 3000 year old law, but I trust in the blood of Jesus Christ, who is interceding with God for me -- AND FOR YOU. Nothing can separate you from God, unless you let it! No woman, no man, nothing in this world has that power -- unless you allow it to.

Our homosexuality is not the greatest sin in the world. Jesus had more to say to the Pharisees who were keeping people out of the Kingdom of God than he had to say about homosexuality (about which, by the way, he said absolutely nothing).

We are having a Homosexuality and the Bible session in conjunction with our new members' classes. You might want to come to that whole session of classes. They are on Monday nights at 7 p.m., March 3<sup>rd</sup> (our faith and beliefs), 10<sup>th</sup> (how we govern ourselves as a church), and 17<sup>th</sup> (homosexuality and the bible) or on Saturday March 25th (all three classes) beginning at 10:00 a.m. *we will provide lunch.*

You need to come to these to help you come to peace with yourself and your sexuality. Being an incest survivor only makes things more difficult for you. A good counselor could help there.

I am praying for you, and hope you will realize that it is our faith in Jesus that saves us from condemnation, not the acceptance of any laws. Be at peace, and I hope to see you in church.

Love, in Christ

Rev. Marge Ragona





Pray for my lower  
back injury. It is  
still a factor but  
I know God is still on the throne!!!

February 2, 1995

Dearest Reverend Marge,

Praise God! I often said if I read it for myself, I would have to seek more into it. Reverend Marge the first time as an adult, I felt the presence of God when I entered your church. Since then, I read Leviticus 18:20-30 and am afraid to even expect myself to be happy and content with a female. I truly believe in God and want to share that pulpit with you in leading the people to heaven. I want to keep learning God's way and I've been gay as long as I remember, but now I've pushed my companion away for reasons and I'm lonely. When I think of seeing someone else I get frustrated because I have had so many girlfriends and feel maybe they didn't work out because had they I would not be questioning if it's right or wrong to be gay. I would not have searched it out. Help me Reverend! I want to preach and study and help others but I am confused! I come from a Holiness background and am an incest survivor. I disliked men as a child and do not feel sexually attracted to them at all so where do I go from here? I've always been told homosexuality is an abomination in God's eyes but I also feel in my heart God loves us





all but is that I feel I need some answers. I don't want to wonder if I'm going to heaven. I want to walk in grace each day. I know God works through people and I feel He led me to you. I truly feel you are a woman of God and I would like to study the ministry under you.

I did not lose my job over a drug test. Thank you for your prayers. I did however lose my job for going to work on the 18<sup>th</sup> of October when I was scheduled to go on the 17<sup>th</sup> of October. My employment charged me with AWO (Absent Without Leave). I go to a hearing (Wrongful termination) on February 7, 1995.

I know God loves me like I am but why am I so confused and lonely and afraid and imprisoned. I'm looking for a home church. I was going to be your 100<sup>th</sup> member that Sunday. Even before I knew you were inducting new members. I came to church that Sunday to join but I became stiff and afraid and then sometime after that Leviticus 18:20-30 was brought to me and I stopped frequenting your church on a regular basis. I don't go to church anywhere now but am leaning on God to direct me to where He needs me.

Confused + Scared

Cassandra Barnes

P.S. I don't have a phone so please write back to me. Love, Cassandra













# Covenant Metropolitan Community Church

Rev. Marge Ragona  
Pastor

Rev. V. Randy Votsch  
Metropolitan Community Church of Charlotte  
4037 East Independence Boulevard, Suite 300  
Charlotte, North Carolina 28205

Dear Randy:

Sorry this letter won't get to you in time for your move and dedication.

I am so happy to see that you are doing well at Charlotte, and that the church is growing and needs new and additional space. That's a sign of health! All of us at Birmingham are happy to know things are prospering for you. We hope your new facilities will bring you even more members and friends who will grow spiritually by the message you are giving, that God is alive and well in our community and we are God's people.

I'm sorry we can't be with you. This month and next have too many things which are keeping me out of town (like preaching at our new group in Tuscaloosa and Mobile's 10th Anniversary; I was its founder, and a group of the founders are meeting there for a reunion. Most of us live in other places now.). I need to keep my nose to the grindstone here in Birmingham most of the rest of the time.

Tuscaloosa, by the way, has had an average of 32 people present over the last month. They are looking at renting their own space and that will give them an opportunity to begin to grow even larger, since the hotel meeting room is getting crowded. Pray for them and they will pray for you. John Hankins is leading them, very well, I might add.

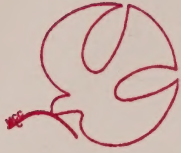
I love you all, and wish you the best in your new space. God bless you.

In Christ,

Rev. Marge Ragona  
Pastor







**Metropolitan Community Church of Charlotte**

4037 East Independence Boulevard, Suite 300

Charlotte, North Carolina 28205

704/563-5810

*Rev. V. Randy Votsch, Pastor*

February 2, 1995

Rev. Marge Ragona  
Covenant MCC  
P.O. Box 101473  
Birmingham, Alabama 35210

Dear Marge:

I am writing to let you know that the Metropolitan Community Church of Charlotte has moved from a suite on the seventh floor to the *entire third floor of the Varnadore Building!* By taking the entire third floor, the church's facility has increased to approximately 5,000 square feet, allowing us to expand our ministry and offer greater resources to other gay-affirmative organizations in the Charlotte community.

*In short, we hope to become a much-needed "community center" for the gay/lesbian/bi community in the greater Charlotte area!*

Our new facility includes a 2,100 square foot sanctuary with seating for 200 in worship, a 960 square foot reception/fellowship area, a 320 square foot meeting room with sound system, piano and organ (*The Lambda Room*), a 432 square foot meeting room with kitchen facilities (*The Rainbow Room*), a church office and a Pastor's Study.

*We would also like to invite you and your congregation to join us on Sunday, February 19, at 10:45 am for the dedication of our new facility and celebration of 15 years of service to the Charlotte community.* The Reverend Jay Neely, District Coordinator for the Gulf Lower Atlantic District of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, will be our special guest on this exciting day. A gala reception will be held following the morning service. I hope you will join us for this day of celebration as we mark this milestone in our church's life.

Thank you for your work and all you do for the gay and lesbian community in your area. Keep us in your prayers as we expand our ministry to reach more people with the ministry of Christ in our area! If the Metropolitan Community Church of Charlotte or I can be of help to you in any way, please call on us!

Your Friend In Christ,

Rev. V. Randy Votsch  
Senior Pastor









May 18, 1995

Joseph Scholtes  
Administrative Assistant  
King of Peace  
Metropolitan Community Church  
3150 Fifth Avenue North  
St. Petersburg, FL 33713

Dear Mr. Scholtes:

I am sorry to say that Charles (Charlie) Hatley is no longer listed as a member of Covenant Metropolitan Community Church. We have searched our rolls and are unable to tell you when he ceased to be a member, but he is remembered as having been a member.

I trust he will make you a fine member, and appreciate your comments about Rev. Cliff Morrison. We are nearing the first year anniversary of his death, and planning to furnish and support an apartment in Agape House, the local independent living facility for people living with AIDS. We hope this will be a fitting memorial to someone who was deeply loved by the people of the church. Again, thanks for remembering and for the encouragement in your letter.

Very sincerely yours,

Rev. Marge Ragona  
Pastor

cc: Clerk







METROPOLITAN  
COMMUNITY CHURCH

Rev. Marge Ragona  
Covenant M.C.C.  
P. O. Box 101473  
Birmingham, AL 35210

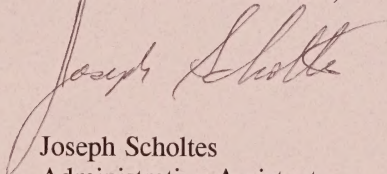
April 7, 1995

Dear Rev. Ragona:

Mr. Charles (Charlie) Hatley has requested that his membership be transferred to King of Peace M.C.C. He was unsure if he was still listed as a member at Covenant or not. Any information you can provide will be appreciated.

On a personal note, I was saddened to hear of Cliff's death. I hear good things are happening in Birmingham, keep up the good work you are doing.

Yours in Christ's Service,



Joseph Scholtes  
Administrative Assistant

3150 5th Avenue North  
St. Petersburg, FL 33713  
Phone: (813) 323-5857  
Fax: (813) 327-7670

Sunday Worship Services  
10:00 AM & 7:30 PM











350 Richmond Road  
Grey Lynn, Auckland, 1002  
New Zealand

19th February 1991

Dear Marg,

We have been meaning to write to you before now, but when you left Moblie we has no address, until Bob Henry recently gave us the same.

Well lots has happened since I was in Mobile and Larry left to come out here, and Larry was sorry not to have been able to have said good bye to before leaving Mobile.

So to recap I guess I had better go back to 1989.

Well Larry duly arrived in Auckland on the 26th May 1989 and was granted a three months visitors permit, which we had changed to a twelve months visitors permit on the 4th July 1989, and from then Larry had a well earned holiday, as well as looking for work, which was a problem. Everyone was impressed with his work record but seeing Larry didnt have a work permit Larry was not successful in job applications. Now this crazy, as the Immigration Service wont issue a work permit unless they have a letter from an employer saying that they are willing to employ a person and stating why a New Zealander has not been accepted for the position.

However in January 1990, Larry obtained a position working for a Car Valet Service Company, and Larry/<sup>was</sup>duly granted a Work Permit on the 9th April 1990, and at the same time applying for Residential Permit, and this was granted on the 11th July 1990. At the sametime the Immigration Service automatically issued a Returning Residents Visa, currant until 11 July 1994 and this can be renewed at anytime after this date. So long as this Visa is kept upto date, Larry,s Residential status is not effected.

We were fortunate with the Immigration Service in that we had no problems with Larry's applications, not like the problems the Church had with Rev. Richard's application.

If Larry wishes to he can take out citizenship after three years from the 11th July 1990. As a resident Larry qualifies for all benefits and can vote, which Larry was able to do at our last General Election, and for the election of the Mayor for Auckland City.

Larry now manages the Car Valet Service, not the greatest job in the country, but the important thing is that Larry has a job, where there so much unemployment in the country, but when things improve he can look for something better, without any bother about permits.





We both attend church ~~regularly~~<sup>regularly</sup> and Larry in on the Auckland Board of Directors for the next three years. As for myself, my three year term of Deacon ended in October 1990 and I have stood down for awhile, and just as well for I suffered a heart attach on the 24th December 1990 and spent a week in the Cardiac Ward of the Auckland General Hospital. Iam progressing quite well now and have to get my weight down to 168lbs. I was 203lbs.before the attach. At the time of writing Iam down to 189,lbs. Sticking to my diet and exercising. Larry make sure of that.

We have joined a Gay Couples Group here in Auckland, and its a excellent club to belong to, with functions every month. The only requiremnet to join is that you must be in a steady relationship. The enclose photo was taken at the Club's Mid-Winter Xmas Dinner(July90) It was also the third anniversary of our coming together, and the same month that Larry's Residential Status was granted. The theme of the evening was Black and White, hence the black and white dress. There are two other American Couples in the Group.

Our relationship is going along just fine, though there have been some moments of anxiety, but our love for each other and our faith soon over came this. There are times when Larry gets down in the dumps, which is only natural, as he misses his friends and family in Mobile, especially at Christmas time. But Larry has been accepted into my large family and gets along well with my mother. Also larry has made new friends within the church and outside the church, which Iam pleased about.

We have just had a wonderful week away together. A Lodge friend of mine has a lovely home at Surfdale, Waiheke Island which we had the use of, and anytime we like when not in use<sup>by</sup> him or his family. So that did Larry alot of good as he was due for a holiday and myself after my heart attach.

To explain a bit about Waihere Island, it is the largest of all the many Islands in the Hauraki Gulf. It has an area of 9324 hectares (36 square miles) a coast line of 96 Kilometers (60miles). The distance ~~from~~<sup>from</sup> Downtown Auckland is 96 Kilometers(12miles)and takes 35 minutes in the Ferry and 1hour 25 minutes in the Vehicular Ferry which we used as we took the car over. The Island has a permanent population of 6,000, but this will treble during the holiday period (Dec. Jan. Feb.) with holiday makers and week end and day trippers. It has some wonderful sandy beaches.





Waiheke would be a great place to retire to. So close to down town Auckland, but a different atmosphere altogether.

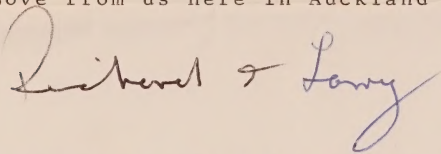
MCC in Auckland is now a Chartered Church, and we have brought a big house (MCC House) to cater for young gays who are out of work and are on a benefit and cant afford to pay high rentals. Takes twenty boarders, and Rev. Mickley has a room and office there also. We were able to obtain a good mortgage ~~from~~<sup>by</sup> the N.Z. Housing Corp. at a very low interest rate of 7% p.a. seeing as we are catering for a low income group. The house cost NZ\$325,000. The church had teething problems with the house, but thing are now running smoothly. MCC in Auckland has an associate Pastor, Rev Michael Horn, who was an Anglican Priest, and has been licenced and will be ordained as MCC Clergy this year. Michael is good value.

Rev Willem Hein (Australia) has been appointed our Church Extension Officer! <sup>by</sup> Rev Elder Jean White, until conference this year. Iam the Treasurer for Church Extension Committee here, so that will be my only active part I will be doing in the church for awhile. I have served MCC in Auckland well for ten years, and now I shall rest awhile, as there are plenty of new and young blood in the church to do the work. We had a New Work started in Christchurch last year and I was envolved in this and was able to take Larry down with me and see our largest city in the South Island. Larry was our cook at the week-end retreat we held at Akaroa, a lovely old French settlement in the South Island, a few Ks. out from Christchurch.

As for your self I trust that you are well and your studies are going well and also thoes of Shirley's

God Bless you both.

Love from us here in Auckland New Zealand.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Richard & Larry". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

P.S. This letter was to have been posted in February, but Larry miss-placed the letter from Bob Henry, and only found same this evening, 18-03-91.









# *"That All May Freely Serve"*

*A Mission Project of the Downtown United Presbyterian Church, Rochester, New York  
in Partnership with Westminster Presbyterian Church, Tiburon, California*

---

*Rev. Dr. Jane Adams Spahr*

*P.O. Box 3707, San Rafael, California 94912-3707, Telephone: (415) 457-8004*

December 29, 1995

Rev. Marge F. Ragona  
Covenant MCC  
PO Box 101473  
Birmingham AL 35210

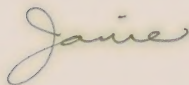
Dear Marge,

Thank you and Covenant congregation for the tremendous hospitality you gave me Sunday evening, December 3rd. It was such a joy to meet you, Shirley, her mother, and so many members of the congregation who could not have been more wonderful to me and my friends. What a magnificent congregation you gather! Your reputation precedes you; Nancy Wilson has talked so highly of you, and I certainly know why.

I know Covenant has been and is a beacon of hope to so many in Alabama. Your leadership, Marge, has been so important here. I hope you know that. You, Shirley, her mother, and your congregation have touched me very deeply. Thank you for making it possible for me to be with you.

I look forward to staying in touch, and you know if ever you're in the San Francisco Bay Area you come and see me, and if ever I'm back in Birmingham I would love to see you again. I hope your holiday season was filled with wonder and hope.

With love and deepest gratitude,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Janie".

Janie Spahr

To ensure the continuation and success of this project, please send a tax-deductible contribution to:  
"That All May Freely Serve", c/o The Downtown United Presbyterian Church  
121 North Fitzhugh Street, Rochester, New York 14614



# Community AIDS Volunteer Outreach

P.O. Box 55703 ★ Birmingham, Alabama 35255 ★ 205-786-4357 ★ FAX 205-788-4643

Loren Peters, Coordinator

Sponsoring agencies:

A Baby's Place of Alabama  
AIDS Task Force of Alabama  
Birmingham AIDS Outreach  
Jefferson County AIDS in Minorities  
UAB 1917 Clinic

Steering Committee:

Rev. Malcolm Marler  
Patricia Todd  
Randall Russell  
Tony Morris  
Rev. Susan Clayton  
Rev. Marge Ragona

February 13, 1996

Rev. Marge Ragona  
911 G Valley Avenue  
Birmingham, Alabama 35209

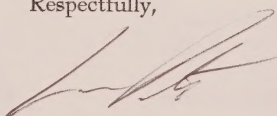
Rev. Ragona,

As I mentioned during our brief telephone conversation on February 8, Patricia Todd had telephoned me explaining that you have agreed to serve as a member of the steering committee for the Community AIDS Volunteer Outreach program. This letter is to welcome you to the committee and to tell you how much I, as well as the members of the committee, appreciate your interest and willingness to serve in this capacity.

The next regular steering committee meeting is scheduled for March 6 at 2:00, at the offices of AIDS Task Force of Alabama located at 2112 Avenue H, Ensley (formerly St. Anthony's Church Rectory). Please let me know as soon as you can whether or not you will be able to attend.

Meanwhile, if you have any questions, please call me at 786-4357. I will look to hear from you soon.

Respectfully,

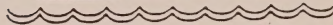


Loren Peters,  
Coordinator





METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH



CHARLESTON

8-9

Dear Marge,

Thank you so much for serving  
as a Pastoral Care Volunteer at  
General Conference. Your gifts of  
time and counsel were, as always,  
greatly appreciated

In Service with you  
Mary M. Moore

February 29, 1996

Rev. Marge Ragona  
%Covenant MCC  
PO Box 101473  
Birmingham, AL 35210

Dear Marge,

Just a note to say thank you to you and your congregation for the warm welcome we received while in Birmingham for your Anniversary week-end. I could truly feel the spirit of God everywhere that weekend. To see your members so dedicated and willing to do what ever needed to be done, lead me to take a look at my own commitment here. Upon coming back I was talking to Reid and kept saying if only we were as committed here as they are at Marge's church. Than God made me realize quite talking and do something about it. Some times you have to leave home to have your eyes opened up. Birmingham is lucky to have you and lucky also to have such a devoted staff of Deacons. They are wonderful.

I passed on to the Board of Directors your note that you would be willing to help in case of an emergency. That was greatly appreciated.

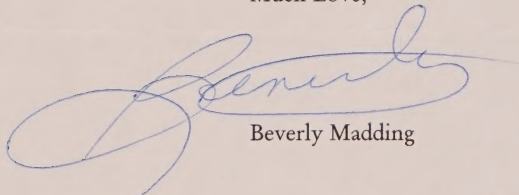
I look forward to getting away more often in the months to come so will be back to see you.

Oh yes, I am going to be Grandma in September. My son and daughter -in-law are expecting. I am really excited and just pray that everything will be ok. She has so medical problems that we need to watch real carefully. It's also due around his Dad's birthday. Which would be real healing for him if the baby happen to be born on that day.

My prayers are with you and your church and know that God will continue to bless your ministry.

Give my love to Shirley and to Mom Lambert. See you in Nashville if not before.

Much Love,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Beverly Madding', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

Beverly Madding

1647 Briarcliff Rd.  
Apt 5  
Atlanta, GA 30308



